

# IF VICIOUS VER HORSES ...

The hero was brave and strong and willin'  
She felt his chin -- then wed the villain

In the May 1972 Word Ways, readers were invited to supply Albert Wilansky of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania with V-W homophonic pairs as illustrated by the 1953 Burma-Shave advertisement above. The following more-or-less definitive list has been compiled by Stefan and Betsy Burr, Murray Pearce and Mary Youngquist:

vet	wet	very	wary	verst	worst
vow	wow	veal	weal	verse	worse
veil	wail	vein	wane	veery	weary
vine	wine	veer	wier	viper	wiper
vend	wend	vive	weave	vicar	wicker
vest	west	vault	Walt	vizard	wizard
vent	went	veldt	welt	verily	warily
vile	wile	visor	wiser	vassal	wassail
Veep	weep	valse	waltz	vicious	wishes

A few additional pairs are doubtful, as they depend upon variant pronunciations or contractions:

vision	wishin'	vermin	wormin'	villain	willin'
vox	walks	vaunted	wanted		

V-W pairs need not be restricted to the first letter:

revoke	rewoke	rover	rower	svelter	swelter
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Perhaps the most unusual V-W pair is one in which V and W exchange places with each other: VIEW - WEAVE.

Ask Mary Youngquist what a V-W homophonic pair is, and she'll tell you it's vair von verdigris in sound vitta second except for the first consonant. In similar vein, she has constructed the following one-acter to make the whole matter perfectly clear:

The Mask of the Green Urn  
(other vise known as The Veered Vizard of Verd Vase)

Dramatis Personae:

Daughter (a skinny, pale little kid, a Von Dyke indeed with  
a vee neck and vetoes)

Mother (a small bird-like woman, always veery, but no visor)

- D: I'm a vision to go out -- is this the coat you vaunt me to verify do?
- M: No, it has too much vair and you'll get velvet in all that rain.  
You'll just get veteran colder the longer you stay out, and your cough'll be verse. Then violin bed tonight you'll need vicks in your nose.
- D: Vi, how can candles cure a cold?
- M: Oh, you silly thing, I mean Vicks Vaporub!  
(Vow! I'll vignette in this kid-battle! Villa lecture help? She's all vase very and tries vermin herself out of duties. Her father and I verilities over her poor school grades, too.)
- D: Velma, then I'll stay in for a little vial, until my two brothers come home. Then vessel probably go out, and vault (or volley), too.
- M: O.K., I'm going to do dishes in a viol and I'm looking for a viper. Then sit here in the vicar chair next to the vain Scot in the kitchen, and I'll tell you a story about Don Vaughn, the great lover, and his carousing. He, in a vacillate three roast pigs and toasted the guests in red vines. Enough to make a grown man Veep!
- D: Ma, you verso right! If I vent now I'd get vet! Better to be still vile you viva fairy tale. But Venice Pa coming home?
- M: I guess he'll virus a day ahead -- he's vending his veery vase in the vest now. And that reminds me -- to greet him, shall I put on my new vigor not? He doesn't like vim an' frowzy lookin'.